

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

TOWN HALL RENOVATIONS PROJECT BUILDING COMMITTEE

December 16, 2013

Town Hall – Lower Level Conference Room L101

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

- I. Call to Order – The meeting was called to order at 5:02 PM by Mrs. Cohen, as the senior Committee member of the majority party.
- II. Roll Call – Members present: Clarke Castelle, Myra Cohen, Dan Dinunzio, Bill DeBlasio (left at 6:10 PM), Scott Soares, Paul Vessella, Jen Win-Johnson. Others Present: Members of the public; Dave King, Kaestle Boos Associates; Ed Moriarty, Downes Construction Company; John Salomone, Town Manager; Dr. William Collins, Superintendent of Schools; Lou Jachimowicz, Chief Finance and Operations Officer; Bob Korpak, Director of Facilities Management; Bruce Till, Superintendent of Parks and Recreation; and Jeff Baron, Director of Administrative Services.
- III. Public Participation – Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive. She welcomed the new members of the Committee.
- IV. Election of Officers – Mrs. Cohen made a motion to nominate Clarke Castelle as Chairperson of the Committee. A second to the motion was made by Mr. Soares. No other nominations were presented. The motion passed unanimously.
- V. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes – On page 2 of the October 28, 2013 minutes, the reference to “certain codes” was not intended to be exclusionary or to imply that certain other codes were not being met. The term “construction budget” in Section V on page 1, refers to the estimated cost to construct the Community Center, exclusive of design costs, and does not refer to the Capital Improvement Plan or any other budget document. Mrs. Cohen made a motion that the minutes of the October 28, 2013 meeting be approved as written. A second to the motion was made by Mr. DeBlasio. The motion passed unanimously.
- VI. Overview of Community Center Concepts – The Project Architect, Construction Manager, and Town staff have been working to refine the program for both the Town Hall and the Community Center. Mr. King made a presentation to the Committee, starting with the Mortensen Community

Center, showing various drawings of what is being proposed. The Site Plan was presented. It showed a stand alone building located on the opposite end of Mill Pond Park from the Town Hall. The entrance driveway was moved from Willard Avenue to Cross Street. Willard Avenue is a State highway and approvals would not be needed from the State to enter onto Cross Street, which is a Town road. The Floor Plan of the proposed new Community Center was presented, showing the lobby, administrative offices, day care center, teen center, kitchen, arts and crafts room with its own storage area, two gymnasium spaces with a glass front off the hallway (also with a rolling curtain, portable bleachers and storage), a dance studio with a glass front to the hallway, an exercise room with a glass front to the hallway, mechanical rooms, and toilet and locker spaces proximate to where the pool is expected to go.

The question was asked if there was sufficient bleacher space. The portable bleachers are what Mr. Till recommended. They are more like what is in place at the elementary schools. The current Mortensen Community Center bleachers are there because they were not removed when the Town Hall was converted from a High School. Portable bleachers would also accommodate the walking track that goes around the two gymnasiums. Mr. Till noted that he was looking to open up the spaces where glass areas in the walls are now being proposed. Mr. King presented a color coded floor plan followed by the square footage of the building. It was initially thought that 38,600 square feet were needed. The current program has a gross square footage of 33,137. The number of lockers is believed to be adequate, even with both the gym and the pool in use at the same time. The pool will not actually be relocated as part of this project. That is planned to occur sometime after the new Community Center is completed. Rest rooms were added based on comments at the last Committee meeting. All facilities will be handicapped accessible. There will be four public toilets and one for administrators.

Elevation drawings were presented. These show how the building would look upon construction. The Community Center would be a pre-engineered metal building. They are less costly to build. It will have metal panels, with masonry at the base, a pitched roof, glazing across the front, and a tall entrance space. Mr. King presented a Wall Section, showing a twelve foot high masonry wall. He concluded the Community Center presentation with Building Section drawings. Mr. King was asked to provide the Committee with .pdf files of what he presented, and to include the toilet space in the dance/exercise area that had been recently added to the program before distributing them.

Mr. Salomone provided background information for the new Committee members. The Committee had decided on the two building concept six months or more ago. It was determined that it was just as cost effective to build separately. The plan is to build the new Mortensen Community Center and move the Recreation Department and staff, creating swing space at the

Town Hall. Temporary offices would be created in the swing space at Town Hall, with the various departments rotating in and out as their respective office spaces are being constructed. Originally the entrance to the Community Center was off of Garfield Street. This resulted in a long driveway so the entrance was moved to Willard Avenue, and now to Cross Street. The Mill Pond pool is in the Capital Improvement Plan down the road for reconstruction adjacent to the new Mortensen Community Center. This will allow for more supervision and control of the pool. That move would create open space on the other side of Mill Pond, where the pool is now. Mrs. Cohen asked about the recommendation to install composite flooring in the gymnasiums when wood flooring has been so well received in the renovated gym at Newington High School. Mr. Till responded that high grade composite flooring was a very good surface and he is recommending that because the Parks and Recreation Department could run the programs that are anticipated on it. The wood floor at the High School is only used for very specific athletic events. It can't be used for a number of other things, such as dances. The price of the floor would be determined by the grade that is selected. The aesthetics of the building are important. The building is being constructed in a very visible location.

- VII. Overview of Town Hall Concepts – Mr. King also made a presentation of the program for the renovated Town Hall. It began with a Site Plan. It would have a new main entrance facing Garfield Street and would capture the empty space of the current Town Hall courtyard by turning it into visible space. Visitors to the current Town Hall have difficulty finding their way around. Some departments have a greater influx of walk-in traffic during certain times of the year that the current building is not amenable to. The current set up doesn't work well. The new building will have mall front openings for offices. If Garfield Street is realigned there would be additional parking spaces created. The lot that is on Garfield Street now could double in size. More spaces for both citizens and staff would be created. Citizens would be provided with the easiest access to the front of the building, which would now face Garfield Street. The most demand for parking is during the day. There would also be a roundabout for better vehicle access. The decision to straighten out Garfield Street would not be made by the Committee. It also would no longer be proposed to be funded by a grant. A different circulation pattern is being proposed for the upper parking lot. It will not be a straight line, in an effort to slow traffic down. The Site Plan does not anticipate the parking lot re-connecting to Cedar Street but does allow for future expansion by the library.

The Main Level Floor Plan was presented. The Upper Level is still in the early design stages and there is no floor plan to present at this time. The Main Level Floor Plan was color coded and included an entrance vestibule/lobby into the atrium space, the Tax Collector and Assessor's Offices, the Registrar of Voters Office, the Town Manager and Mayor's Office, the Finance Office,

the Town Clerk's Office, the Central Connecticut Health District Office, and new Town Council Chamber. There would only be code compliance work for the auditorium. Human Services would continue to use their current office space but would consolidate their operations at that end of the building, using the old Town Clerk's vault for the Food Bank, and having a new entrance and waiting area that is located where part of the Main Lobby is currently located.

Most departments would be accessed off the atrium. There are a number of conference and meeting rooms that are meant to be shared. The Health District Office and the Town Council Chambers would not be directly off the atrium. The current Teen Center space would be used for Registrar of Voters storage and training. There would be a new elevator off the lobby and a new elevator for the Transition Academy wing. The new elevator off the lobby connects the Building, Engineering, Town Planner, and Code Enforcement Offices to the rest of Town Hall, as shown on the Lower Level Floor Plan. This creates the ability to communicate vertically within the building. A Building Section drawing was also presented.

The size of the offices correspond to the space needs study as revised in January. They meet the needs of all the departments. The Chair asked that all Committee members receive these space needs. The new Council Chamber is a multipurpose meeting room that can also be used by others besides the Town Council. This plan will allow for a more secure building in that the public will be funneled through the front of the building. Mrs. Cohen asked for a copy of the Main Level Floor Plan and also what exists now so that the two can be compared side by side.

It is a major undertaking to correct the issues in the building. There is a need to remove asbestos, replace the electrical service, etc. A layout had to be developed that works best. Offices will be disturbed for HVAC (heating, ventilating and air conditioning) and wiring. The current layout was revised to get a more user friendly space for the public and for staff. There will be as little demolition of load bearing walls as possible. The office space was designed to conform to the existing load bearing walls in order to save construction dollars. The new Council Chambers are smaller than the auditorium but one-third larger than what exists now (the current L101). The atrium can handle the overflow on those occasions when there are crowds that are too large for the Council Chambers alone. The stage is not being modified, for cost saving purposes. This space will be modified to meet fire code requirements.

An Interior Perspective was presented showing the atrium space. On the Upper Level it would have corridor space for the Board of Education areas. The Project Architect is just starting on the Board of Education's needs for the Upper Level. There have been a number of changes since the original space needs were developed during the previous Superintendent of Schools'

administration. The totem pole and the time capsule are expected to move to the new atrium. The upper parking lot will have intermediate levels for better grading and access to Human Services. The Veteran's monument will be relocated to a prominent space. An Interior Elevation of the Lobby was also presented.

Mr. Salomone summed up by noting that recent efforts had been focused on the cost factors of the Community Center and honing in on the key concepts of the Town Hall. The Board of Education space still needs to be addressed. An estimated budget number for construction is needed. A number of issues (atrium, auditorium, etc.) also needed to be settled. Documents that were distributed in the past will be distributed to the new Committee members.

- VIII. Consideration of an Advanced Level of Design – Mr. Baron told the Committee that cost estimates are not yet at a point where staff is prepared to present them. The Construction Manager has indicated that greater detail would allow him to provide more precise figures. Elements that are in doubt require supposition and that in turn results in a higher estimate. The Committee, at the time that Kaestle Boos Associates was selected as the Project Architect, approved their lower proposed fee level of \$50,067.50. Kaestle Boos Associates also included in their proposal a higher level of design for an additional fee of \$84,350. The Committee and staff did not wish to spend the higher amount unless it needed to. As the cost estimates are now exceeding the anticipated, budgeted levels (\$9,975,000 for the Town Hall and \$7,974,750 for the Mortensen Community Center), that greater level of detail is needed. The additional fee would provide building section drawings and building details, exterior elevation drawings, mechanical /electrical/plumbing narratives, and better finish and millwork information. If the referendum passes, the post referendum fee would be lowered as there would be less work for the architect to do. If the referendum fails, only those areas that require redesign would not be re-used. The available project budget would allow for this additional fee. There is a need to flesh out a higher level of detail for better final numbers. Mrs. Cohen made a motion that an additional \$84,350 be approved for Kaestle Boos Associates to provide an advanced level of design, to be charged to CIP account number 31110-88804, Public Building Fund, Town Hall Improvements. A second to the motion was provided by Mr. Dinunzio. Discussion: The Town Council appointment resolution and the Town Attorney's opinion only allows the Board of Park and Recreation members to vote on matters related to the Community Center site, the building size and configuration, and the relocation of other facilities on the site. The motion passed by a vote of 5 Yes to 0 NO (Ms. Win-Johnson ineligible to vote, Mr. DeBlasio absent).
- IX. Scheduling and Procedural Matters – Mr. Moriarty touched on the schedule that the project would have leading up to a referendum in early June. The Community Center design is largely done. The Town Hall design would

continue until the first week of January. Design revisions and budgeting would take place in January. Final design and budget numbers would need to be presented to the Building Committee for approval by the end of February. The Building Committee's approval would be needed by March 3rd. Town Council action is anticipated by the end of March, most likely at their March 25th meeting. April and May would be devoted to informing the public. If the public information period is stretched out, the early effort would be wasted. There will need to be public meetings. A computer generated fly by is included in the architect's fee. The financial and fiscal impact will be in the mailer that goes to all voters. The mailer must be neutral. A staging schedule will be provided before the referendum. This will be complicated for the Town Hall.

The Committee agreed by consensus to meet on an as needed basis rather than have regularly scheduled meetings. Meetings will be at 5:00 PM on Mondays whenever possible. Members are to be asked to acknowledge that they will be attending, rather than to indicate that they are unable to attend.

- X. Any Other Business Pertinent to the Committee – the next meeting of the Committee will be on January 13, 2014. Kaestle Boos Associates will have additional details, a program for the Board of Education space, and color coded .pdf files. Committee members were encouraged by the Chair to attend the Capital Improvement Plan Committee meeting that will be held on December 18th at 4:00 PM. Mr. Castelle thanked the other members of the Committee for selecting him as Chairperson and for their participation during the meeting.
- XI. Public Participation – Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive – The Committee is selling this project to the public. She is taking in a lot of information. She also has lots of questions. There have been articles in the paper that misconstrue or misrepresent information. Some are concerned about building a separate building for Parks and Recreation. She is concerned that the separate building does not take away from the Town Hall. It needs to be easier for the public to get this information. One member of the public has asked why we need a fitness room at the new Community Center when there are private fitness centers in close proximity. The Committee needs to start educating people. She recognizes the need for the building to be upgraded, it is 80 degrees in the Assessor's Office in the middle of the winter. On using Cross Street as an entrance, is there another street to Wilson Avenue? Will current offsite Parks and Recreation programs be moved to the new Community Center once it has been built? Will there be one or two referendums and how will the question(s) be asked? As to the drawings with Garfield Street being straightened out, is the library on board? Expansion of the Tax and Assessor's vault will be difficult on employees. She can't see how the Committee will flip offices and continue to conduct business. Will you need to rent temporary offices? She asks that the .pdf files be made available to the members of the public in the

library and/or the Town Manager's Office. Although the auditorium stays as it is and the floor could be leveled in the future, she believes there are issues with the floor. There will be more room for Human Services. It is tough to get food into the Food Bank and for client access, what is the plan for that? The Town Council Chambers would be moved. The table in the current Council Chambers is nice, but at Conservation Commission and TPZ meetings applicants and the public don't know where to go and it is difficult to see. Consideration should be given to make it better for viewing maps, etc. Some will be for and some against a Parks and Recreation stand alone building. Her primary concern is for the Town Hall. The building is falling apart. It is the first line of contact with Town government. How you present yourself is important.

- XII. Response to Public Participation – The Town Council will set the wording for the referendum. Staff's recommendation will be for one question. The Town Hall can't be built for the amount estimated if a separate question on the Community Center fails. Both designs are integral to each other. There will be a separate entrance for Human Services clients and a separate loading dock area for loading and unloading food and material. Not all Parks and Recreation programs that are currently in the schools and at the Senior and Disabled Center will be moved to the new Mortensen Community Center. The schools will continue to be needed and several programs at the Senior and Disabled Center work quite well there and are expected to remain at that location.

- XIII. Adjournment – The meeting adjourned at 7:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff Baron

Jeff Baron
Director of Administrative Services